

INFORMATION ABOUT WEANING

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THINKING ABOUT WEANING YOUR BABY?

How will I know when it's time to stop breastfeeding, and how do I go about it? These are questions all mothers will eventually ask. The answer to that question is as personal and individual as the relationship you share with your baby, and only you will know the right answer.

Corporate Lactation Services



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THINKING ABOUT WEANING YOUR BABY

The AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life followed by breast-feeding in combination with the introduction of complimentary foods until at least 12 months of age, and continuation of breastfeeding for as long as mutually desired by mother and baby.

Weaning is a natural and inevitable stage that occurs as your baby begins to eat other foods while continuing to breast feed, and ultimately ends with the last breastfeed. Anthropologist, Kathy Dettwyler, provides research suggesting the natural age of weaning to be somewhere between 2.5 and 7 years.

EXPLORE YOUR GOALS AND REASONS FOR WEANING



Although exclusive breastfeeding is best for mother and baby, there may be circumstances where mother must wean prematurely, possibly due to family circumstances, sickness or incompatible medications (there are very few, speak with your lactation consultant about possible alternatives). You may have returned to the workplace or school and feel that you are unable to manage to breastfeed or express your milk consistently enough to maintain your

supply. Your lactation consultant can help you with a plan that works for your situation. It may be that your baby has begun the weaning process sometime after starting solid foods and can drink from a cup. Whatever brings you to this decision, most experts agree, weaning is most easily accomplished gradually when both mother and baby are ready.



Occasionally, babies may suddenly refuse to breast feed, commonly referred to as a “nursing strike”. Many times this can be misinterpreted as baby indicating he is ready to wean. It may be the result of teething or a stuffy nose or a change in the taste of your milk due to the return of your menses. However, weaning rarely occurs suddenly or abruptly, but rather gradually over time. The nursing strike can last for several hours or several days. If this has occurred, please reach out to your consultant for her suggestions.



I'M EXPECTING ANOTHER BABY, CAN I CONTINUE TO BREASTFEED?

Most mothers can continue to breastfeed during pregnancy, and continue to nurse their toddler and newborn, commonly referred to as Tandem Nursing. Speak with your health care provider to determine whether you are considered high risk, or at risk for premature delivery or miscarriage. Sometime in the second trimester, the composition of your milk will change due the influence of hormones, and you may notice a decrease in your milk supply. If your baby is less than a year of age, it is important to monitor his weight, and frequency of wet and dirty diapers, and to provide age appropriate nutrition supplements. During this time your breasts will again begin to produce colostrum, and the change in taste and decreased supply may cause your baby to begin the weaning process. Some babies may wean, and resume nursing after the baby arrives, and mother may find this a comforting way to continue to provide attention to her toddler while devoting much time to the new baby.



SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

- ♥ The age of your baby and his nutritional and developmental needs at the time of weaning.
- ♥ How much time will you have to wean?
- ♥ Do you want to wean partially or completely?

PARTIAL OR COMPLETE WEANING

Is it possible for me to partially wean my baby, and still make enough milk for some feedings? This often works for some mothers, while others notice when they eliminate several feedings in a day, their overall production goes down, and baby may not take the breast. Although exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is best, if you feel that you do not want to, or are unable to breastfeed or pump exclusively, partial breastfeeding may be a good option for you and your baby. Many mothers choose to retain their morning and night time nursing sessions, while providing their babies with an age appropriate source of nutrition for the day time feedings.

Once milk production is well established, usually after the first 6 weeks, some mothers are able to wean down to a few feedings per day and maintain their supply. This alternative may work well for working moms or those returning to work or school, and

your baby will continue to receive the many benefits of your milk! If your baby is younger than one year of age, you will need to provide him/her with an iron fortified infant formula through his/her first year of life. Speak with your pediatrician about the type and amount of formula your baby will need for his appropriate age and weight.

Breast milk production is regulated by the supply and demand principle. As less milk is removed from the breast, milk production will decrease. Weaning will occur as you decrease the number of breastfeeds or expression of milk. Weaning gradually is best for mother and baby to adjust both physically and emotionally. Rapid weaning can lead to engorgement, plugged ducts and even mastitis (a breast infection). Breastfeeding is a special relationship between mother and baby, and gradual weaning allows time for you both to adjust emotionally as well.

YOUR BABY IS READY

Baby Led Weaning, as mentioned earlier, rarely occurs before age 1 and may take place over weeks, months or even years. This begins when your baby starts to take in more solids while still nursing on demand. More and more breastfeeds will be replaced by other foods and drinks until he/she is getting most of his/her nutrition from other foods and drinks and is drinking

well from a cup. There will eventually come a time when other interests will slowly replace nursing sessions, and every baby is unique and will reach this developmental milestone at his/her own pace. Allowing baby to continue to nurse until developmentally and emotionally outgrowing the need sometime after the first year is best.

YOU ARE READY

Mother Led Weaning If you have decided that this is the best decision at this time for you and your baby, it is best to do so gradually and with love (LaLeche League). Weaning slowly is best for you and your baby emotionally as well as physically. Gradual weaning occurs when you reduce the number of breast feeds your baby has, and your breasts will respond by making less and less milk. This will allow your breasts to adjust slowly and to observe your baby's reaction to the weaning process and introduction of formula and/or solids. This type of weaning may be a little more difficult but can be accomplished with providing lots of love and sensitivity to your baby's needs. **Babies breastfeed not only for nutrition, but also for emotional comfort, and there are many ways you can continue to meet those emotional needs.** Your lactation consultant can offer suggestions and support.

WEANING AND YOUR BABY'S AGE

If your baby is under the age of 12 months, and you are weaning from the breast, you will need to provide your baby with either pumped breast milk or infant formula in place of the missed feeding. Begin by giving your baby one bottle or cup of formula in place of a regular breastfeed. If you have not previously introduced a bottle to your baby, this transition might be a bit difficult for the older baby. Your lactation consultant can offer tips to help with bottle or cup transition. If your baby is older than 6 months, they may be able to drink from a cup. This is also the time when you can begin offering solids as a complement in addition to breast milk. Weaning over a period of several weeks allows your breasts to adjust gradually as well as observing how your baby reacts to formula.

WEANING A BABY 1 YEAR OF AGE AND OLDER

Breastfeeding an older baby or toddler is different from breastfeeding the younger baby and although the weaning principle remains the same, the approach may be quite different. If your baby is over the age of 12 months, they may begin drinking whole cow's milk in addition to solids.

And as breastfeeding provides both a source of nutrition as well as comfort, the older baby may hold on to their early morning, naptime and bedtime feedings, and these may be the last to be dropped. Some signs that weaning might be going too quickly might be increased clinginess and fear of separation or anxiety.

Many mothers find they are able to replace an asked for breast feed by redirecting their child to a favorite activity, reading a book together or playing a game. Prepare ahead of time to have good quality snacks readily available. During this weaning process, you may need to avoid areas where you would normally nurse together and offer alternative activities. Enlisting the help of your partner to take the baby for walks, strolls or tuck in for naps can also be very helpful.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR WEANING THE OLDER BABY OR TODDLER

- ♥ Anticipate regularly asked for nursing sessions and plan for substitution or distraction by offering to play a game, take a walk outside, go to the park, a favorite snack, read a story.
- ♥ Offer a cup (possibly let them choose their own special cup).

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR WEANING THE OLDER BABY OR TODDLER (CONT)

- ♥ Offer lots of hugs and extra attention.
- ♥ Enlist the help of your partner, family or friends – some babies/toddlers will not readily accept bottles or foods from mom when they know mom and the breast is near by.
- ♥ Have your partner or family member put baby/toddler down for nap or bedtime, offering a snack while a story is being read.
- ♥ If baby is still co-sleeping with you and nurses upon awakening, plan to be up and dressed before baby awakens.
- ♥ If trying to wean from night time or morning feeds, try having baby have a sleepover with the grandparents
- ♥ Try to begin with dropping/eliminating one feeding or expression of breast milk over 3-5 days. It is usually easiest to begin with the feeding your child is least likely to miss. If you find that your breasts become uncomfortable or overly full, express just enough to comfort (do not completely drain the breast as this will encourage more milk to be made). Pumping just enough to relieve discomfort should not affect your

weaning process. This will begin to signal your breasts to stop producing milk during this time. You can also place clean, cold green cabbage leaves inside the bra. Mild pain-relieving medications and anti-inflammatory drugs such as Ibuprofen may also be taken as well, and your health care provider can advise you about this. Always check with your health care provider before taking any medications. Once there is no longer any fullness experienced during that usual feed/expression, you can begin to drop the next feed/expression of milk.



Another option is to shorten the length of feeds as well, thereby not fully emptying the breast. During this time, replace one daily breastfeed at a time with solids or liquids depending on your baby's age. Continue this process until you have gradually dropped all feedings. Generally, it takes about 2-3 days for your body to adjust to one less feeding, so you can anticipate weaning to take from 2-4 weeks depending on the number of times you are currently feeding/expressing each day.

SUPPORTIVE PRACTICES WHILE WEANING

- ♥ Wear a supportive, not constrictive, bra to support your breasts.
- ♥ Clean, cold, green cabbage leaves may be worn inside your bra.
- ♥ If you feel uncomfortably full, express just enough milk to relieve discomfort.
- ♥ Anti-inflammatory/pain relieving medications such as Ibuprofen may be used.
- ♥ milk suppressing herbals
- ♥ avoiding additional breast stimulation.

POTENTIAL RISKS WHILE WEANING

While you are weaning, continue to observe your breasts closely for engorgement, plugged ducts or mastitis. If managed early, this can be easily resolved. If you should develop a lump in the breast, tender red area, or fever of 101 degrees or higher, reach out to your lactation consultant and health care provider.

There are some herbals that are noted to decrease breast milk production, such as sage, peppermint, parsley, jasmine and spearmint. These may

possibly be considered if you need to wean quickly, or your breasts are not responding to the weaning process and you continue to experience engorgement. Speak with your lactation consultant and doctor about the pros and cons of all herbal supplements, and to see if this is right for you.

WEANING AND YOUR EMOTIONS

Mothers often experience many different emotions during and after weaning ranging from joy and newfound freedom to sadness and depression. The decrease in the hormones prolactin and oxytocin may also contribute to mixed emotions and seem to more pronounced with abrupt weaning. Whether you've nursed your baby for a few weeks or years, weaning can be a bittersweet experience, especially if you feel that



you weaned before you had originally planned. If you are experiencing sadness or depression that lasts more than two weeks, tell someone how you are feeling and seek the advice of your primary health care provider. You may be wondering how you can replace that special bond you both shared. If you have now introduced a bottle, you can still hold your baby close to your breast and continue plenty of eye contact throughout the feeding. Lots of hugs and snuggles throughout the day!

Cherish the memories of the times you provided your baby with the gift of your milk, and realize what a great mom you are!



CONTACT US!

Call 1-888-818-5653

My Lactation Consultants Name
and telephone extension is:



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REFERENCES

Dettwyler, K.A. /A Natural Age of Weaning. <http://whale.to/u/dettwiller.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics, <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Breastfeeding/Pages/AAP-Policy-on-Breastfeeding.aspx>

The Office on Women's Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human services,
www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding